



VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

APRIL 2005

TWO DOLLARS



Director's Column

What do you get when you introduce 16 middle/high school teachers to a five-day course that examines the biological complexity of our woods, waters and wildlife?

We got a summer adventure that offers a unique approach to providing hands-on instructional methods for teaching teachers to instruct students about Virginia's wildlife and natural resources.

The purpose of this new and exciting project is to promote awareness of Virginia's significant wildlife and fishery resources through integration of the biological and ecological sciences, natural resource conservation issues, and computer technology. The ultimate goal is for teachers to understand the science behind the conservation and management of Virginia's living resources and to recognize the underlying causes and solutions to issues regarding wildlife and natural resources. In addition, the networking opportunities afforded through interaction with the wide variety of workshop instructors, representing the range of private and public wildlife and conservation organizations, provides participants with links to many additional resources for curriculum development and classroom support.

Coursework covers topics ranging in scope from regional wildlife populations to landscape-level processes through hands-on field activities within riparian forests, wetlands, and tidal and non-tidal aquatic habitats of the coastal James River, a major Chesapeake Bay tributary. Participants are introduced to the unique ecology and habitats of the coastal Chesapeake Bay region, and activities that emphasize research and management of the region's native resident and migratory species. Participants take part in hands-on scientific investigation from hypothesis development to observation and data collection to data analysis and interpretation, and learn how this process informs conservation and management about the



William L. Woodfin, Jr.

Chesapeake Bay's living resources. The course also provides methodologies, materials and projects that allow teachers to utilize this information in their classrooms to help meet Virginia's Standards of Learning.

This new workshop, which we expect to continue annually, has been developed cooperatively by

the Center for Environmental Studies (CES) at Virginia Commonwealth University and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). The workshops include a combination of lectures, demonstrations, hands-on field activities and training in Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). The workshops involve faculty and staff from CES, VCU Life Sciences and VDGIF personnel from all our Divisions (Wildlife, Fisheries, Wildlife Diversity, Communications and Information and Law). In addition to the cooperators, professionals like Dr. William McShea, a research scientist for the Wildlife Conservation Society and Smithsonian Institute, and Amber Foster, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, helped to lead and design complex workshop activities. Furthermore, Environmental Systems Research Institute Inc. (ESRI), a leading geospatial software manufacturer, contributed its expertise to assist teachers in synthesizing data, and also donated GIS licenses to each teacher to take back to their classrooms.

Evelyn Holt, from Gar-Field Senior High School in Woodbridge, and a participant of last year's workshop, summarized this successful program by stating "All Virginia science teachers should be required to take this course to 'fill in the gaps' in their environmental knowledge... This partnership opportunity is a chance to fill the void of knowledge and to educate all citizens in Virginia of their precious resources and how to preserve them."

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

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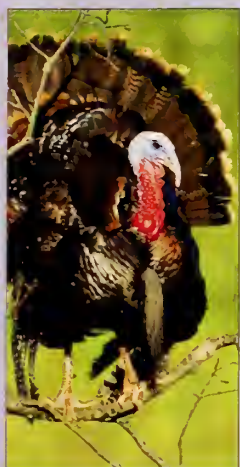
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By the 1900s, the wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) was on the verge of extinction. Thanks to hunters, wildlife biologists and groups, like the National Wild Turkey Federa-

tion, the wild turkey has seen a remarkable recovery. In Virginia their numbers have grown to over 180,000 birds, with the highest population densities in the Tidewater, south mountain and south Piedmont regions. ©John R. Ford.

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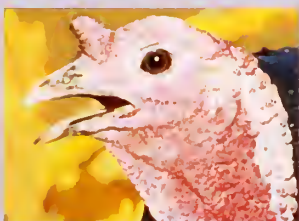


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Virginia Woods, Waters and Wildlife

*What could be
more natural than
teaching teachers
about nature?*

by Beth Sellers

I'm not a hunter, a fisherman, or an outdoors person. Growing up on a farm, my sister owned the horse because I didn't want to walk in the pasture to get it. As a child, when my father found orphaned baby rabbits or opossums and showed them to me I cried for their hopeless future,

knowing I didn't have what it took to save them. As a science teacher, I tell my students to take the frogs and snakes to my colleague across the hall. (I like rocks, dirt, and weather. Abiotic things don't die.)

So what on earth interested me in an offering sent through my school e-mail from Donna Conner, my Roanoke County Science Coordinator, telling me about a summer workshop called "Virginia Woods, Waters and Wildlife, A Wildlife Workshop for Science Teachers, Grades 6-12"? I teach general science to sixth grade students at Glenvar Middle School. Two years ago the Virginia Standards of Learning in sixth grade science were changed to encompass environmental and earth science principles. I

needed to know more about the woods, waters and wildlife of Virginia to become a more effective teacher. This workshop, partially funded by USFWS, was presented by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Environmental Studies (VCU-CES). It promised "field trips to the VCU Rice Center, a 342-acre research station located on the James River just below the city of Hopewell, and other locations to gain hands-on experience in the methods used by biologists, wetland scientists and wildlife managers." Here was the promise to teach me "to use cutting-edge technologies to study wildlife populations." Intimidating? You bet.



Game wardens guide teachers along the tidal James River to the next bald eagle sighting. Teachers used GPS units to record sightings and map locations using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) computer technology.

my cautious nature, I consciously decided to seek out opportunities for more excitement in the next half of my life. So why not give this class a chance?

I applied for, and was accepted into the workshop, and looked forward to it with mixed emotions. I feared that turning 50 would imply old age and ill health, and lo and behold, my body upheld its end of the contract. Unexpectedly in early June, I developed a rapidly growing case of cataracts in both eyes. Life changed. I saw doctors and scheduled surgery with the understanding that my condition was not terribly rare, but I rapidly lost the ability to drive my car. The worries of the class loomed even larger over my head. Should I go? Could I go? How would I see anything? I called VCU and explained my situation to Angelica Bega Hart. Help! Angelica assured me that I would be fine. Everything I needed would be within walking distance of the dorm, and she promised they would take care of me. What began as a small adventure on my part grew larger each day.

With permission from my doctor and my ever-patient husband, I left our rented vacation home on July 12 and headed for Richmond. Angelica and Cathy Viverette, CES River Research Associate, met those of us staying in the dorm and gave us the campus tour. Although I spent my favorite undergraduate years as a stu-

dent at VCU, I was astounded at the wonderful changes that have been made to the Monroe Park campus. As I looked at those who joined me, I saw teachers from all over the state of Virginia. Sallie Hill, staying in the room beside mine, was an Earth Science teacher from Madison County. She was everything I feared; young, athletic and obviously a regular par-



Lee Walker

Above: Teachers move in for a closer look at a wren as Mike Wilson, VDGIF nongame wildlife biologist explains the use of bird banding as a tool for monitoring migratory birds.

Below: After a week of investigating Virginia's woods, waters and wildlife, teachers from across the state gather for a group picture. Tired, but still enthusiastic, these new friends prepare to take what they have learned back home to their classrooms!

All of this sounded frightening, but exciting. This was the reality of the situation: the week of July 12-16 2004, spent away from home during my summer vacation (which, unfortunately, had been planned for the same week), this complicated by the summer heat and humidity of Richmond, add in a few *bugs*, the expectation to understand and use brand new technology, and all this while living in a college dormitory in downtown Richmond. None of this was remotely within my realm of comfort. However, the conclusion of the summer would also bring another event in my life. In September I would celebrate my 50th birthday. Having already lived a half a century within my realm of comfort due to

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ticipant in outdoor life. All I could imagine was that I must have been insane to think I could do this.

After a restless night of tossing and turning I was awakened by the incessant pounding of construction workers outside of my window. Thus, I began my journey. We walked to the Center for Environmental Studies to meet Dr. Greg Garman, Director of the CES, and other teachers and administrators responsible for this unique workshop. There we received an overview of the objectives and agenda for the week. This workshop, funded by a grant written by Tom Wilcox with VDGIF, is a brand new venture. No one knew what to expect. As I listened to William L. Woodfin, Jr., Director of VDGIF, welcome us and Dr. Richard Rezba, Director of the VCU Center for Life Sciences Education, explaining the premise of the week, I could only imagine what the week would be like. Amber Foster, with VCU-CES and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, described the watershed aspects of the workshop. And at that point, already running behind schedule, as we would remain for the rest of the week, 20 teachers from all parts of Virginia boarded two VCU vans, and off we went.

We disembarked from our vans that morning at the Virginia Diocesan Center at Roslyn, a protected nature area located on the James River. There, Suzie Gilley, wildlife education coordinator for VDGIF, intro-



Lee Walker



Lee Walker

Top: Teachers are captivated by how a bird-banding station operates. Jeff Cooper, VDGIF nongame wildlife biologist, explains the use of mist nets to capture migratory birds for population monitoring. **Above:** Teachers move in as Mike Wilson and Jeff Cooper explain bird handling and banding techniques. **Left:** A wildlife biologist demonstrates how to determine the age of a wren captured during a bird banding demonstration.



duced us to a variety of Department employees who had traveled to Richmond for the week to assist in our class. That morning we focused on wildlife populations, witnessing cannon-netting explosions, mist nets set up in protected areas, banding techniques, and in-depth discussion of the goal of mark-recapture programs. I watched in amazement. Although those who are involved in wildlife may be familiar with these procedures, I was not. I felt like a sponge. And to my relief, the morning's experience was quite pleasant, with the exception of my inability (like birds) to see a mist net.

With willingness and great patience, the Department employees who met us at Roslyn explained the techniques of their specialties in the care taking and monitoring of the bird species of Virginia. Next we visited Boshers' Dam. There, a state-of-the-art fish ladder has been incorporated into the dam, allowing passage of native shad and river herring for spawning upriver. Later in the afternoon, we reconvened at VCU, where Dr. Garman assisted us in our data application, and by the end of the evening we each received a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit in preparation for the next day's adventure.

Tuesday dawned a little too early. I found my way back to the Center for Environmental Studies and we jumped in the vans for the drive to the Jordan Point Marina. There, after a briefing on safety rules while on the water and the importance of wearing a life jacket, we boarded Department law enforcement patrol boats on a quest for bald eagles. If I had continued to harbor any fears about this week they were put to rest on this day. What a day we had! Under most conditions game warden boats move right along, and the James River was as smooth as glass that day. So many eagles were sighted that I lost count. My new friends told me where to point my camera in hope that I would see eagles with digital magnification. The morning was full of excitement. Using my GPS unit to mark the locations of the eagles became routine,



Lee Walker



Beth Sellers

Top: Swan decoys are arranged as a VDGIF biologist prepares to deploy a cannon net. **Above:** A cannon netting demonstration shows how migratory waterfowl are captured for banding.

but I found it just as exciting to monitor the speed of the Department boats. Our group successfully identified and recorded eight bald eagles.

The mystery of science has always appealed to me. Although it is obvious that I do not teach biology, our environment—the land on which we live and create our existence, is what I

love. To my great delight, watershed education is a new paradigm in the Virginia school system, and one that has growing importance on the health of the world in which we live. On Wednesday, our group traveled to Herring Creek. I watched in amazement as Department employees used backpack electrofishing to

Virginia Woods, Waters and Wildlife

Goal:

To increase educator awareness about wildlife and integrate innovative, hands-on techniques to demonstrate methods and approaches used to conserve wildlife resources in Virginia.

Workshop Sponsor:

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

All Department Divisions, which included Wildlife, Fisheries, Wildlife Diversity, and Law Enforcement, provided instruction during the workshop and covered many topics such as cannon netting, mist netting, GPS/GIS applications, bald eagle surveys, fish sampling, outdoor education (angling, archery, shotgun), etc.

Funding:

Partial funding provided by: Federal Assistance Grant VA-R-1-2 under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program.

Partners:

Virginia Commonwealth University – VCU Life Sciences

The Rice Center for the Environmental Life Sciences www.vcu.edu/rice is VCU's outdoor laboratory and classroom for all things ecological. Located on the tidal James River, the 342-acre site incorporates a diversity of habitats and wildlife resources and supports a wide range of environmental outreach and research activities. For more information on environmental programs and teacher workshops at VCU, visit www.vcu.edu/cesweb and www.vcu.edu/workshops.

ESRI

These workshops are helping teachers, and their institutions use spatial tools to answer personal and community (local to global) questions and are a perfect catalyst for the Commonwealth's initiative to include Geospatial Technology in the SOLs. ESRI's K-12 program has made available numerous resources such as software, data, books, lessons, etc. to further promote these initiatives. For more information, please visit: <http://www.esri.com/industries/k-12/index.html> or contact Matthieu Denuelle.

For More Information About the Upcoming 2005 Summer Workshop to be Held June 27 – July 1, 2005, Contact:

Tom Wilcox, VDGIF, (804) 367-6892 or e-mail Tom.Wilcox@dgif.virginia.gov.
Cathy Viverette, VCU-CES, (804) 828-2428 or e-mail cbvivere@vcu.edu.
Visit the following Web sites: www.vcu.edu/workshops or www.dgif.virginia.gov.

survey the health of the creek. As the fish were temporarily stunned, they were netted and isolated to count, identify and evaluate. The types of fish caught are correlated to the health of the creek. There was no way we would escape as spectators alone, and soon we were in the water using a much less high-tech approach. Using seining nets, we waded into the creek to catch fish to identify. However, the creek turned out to be a little deeper than expected, and the brave were soon in up to their armpits. I've spent all my life in the clear mountain creeks of western Virginia, so it took a little work to convince me that coffee colored tidal water is clean. Later, we moved from netting fish to netting macroinvertebrates. Using the "Save Our Streams" protocol, we collected tiny invertebrates; their count is a direct indication of the cleanliness and health of the stream.

That night, after returning to the dorm for a mandatory shower and clean clothes, we were treated to a private showing and dinner at the Nature Center at Maymont Park. My favorite part of the behind-the-scenes tour was a glimpse of the equivalent of the Saturday Night Live "Bass-o-matic" used to whip up the food for the center's aquatic life. What a wonderful gift Richmond has received and there is absolutely no charge for the public to see examples of Virginia native wildlife.

Thursday arrived. It is difficult to put into words the amount of enjoyment and knowledge I had gained in only three days. My fears were gone and my confidence was boosted, and I looked forward each day to a new adventure. How could it get any better? But it did. On Thursday we traveled back to the Rice Center. Carrying our trusty GPS units, by now I had tracked and marked all the important landmarks around VCU, including my favorite coffee shop. We met wildlife biologist Dr. Bill McShea, with the Wildlife Conservation Soci-

Teachers are introduced to the mechanics of fishway construction at Boshers Dam along the James River near Richmond.



Lee Walker



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Top: Teachers test their knowledge as they are challenged to collect and identify fish in Herring Creek. **Above:** Participants sort and classify macroinvertebrates in order to evaluate stream conditions using the "Save-Our-Streams" methodology. Paul Bugas (red shorts) and Bob Greenlee (tan shirt), VDGIF fisheries biologists, assist teachers in identification of specimens.

ety and Smithsonian Institution in Front Royal. With contagious enthusiasm he led us through data collection using artificial nests and traps. Plasticine eggs had been placed alongside real eggs in pseudo-nests to attract predators. We located the nests using our GPS units, marked our findings and collected white-footed mice that had been trapped at each site. First we inspected and weighed each mouse and banded it before releasing it. Then, we examined the remaining plasticine eggs to determine the evidence left by the predator. We looked for teeth and claw marks, as well as evidence left from the remains of the real eggs. Of everything we did during the week this was my favorite. I felt like a member of a crime scene investigation team. After lunch, McShea led us through a discussion of the effect that deer overpopulation has on the abundance of forest birds. I listened intently, aware that our school grounds are the ideal environment for deer overpopulation. Lots of questions and study topics, along with grant ideas, were filling up my head.

And just when I thought the week could not get better, the Department had a special treat for us Thursday night. We were taken to the Amelia Wildlife Management Area for a night "on the town." Immense planning had been given to providing a well-rounded scope of activities offered under the auspices of the Department. Divided into groups, we partook on a grand tour of sporting activities. As luck would have it, I arrived at the shooting range first. I had held a firearm only once in my life. However, my Department instructor did not take no for an answer, and with her amazingly capable assistance, I did it! Not only did I shoot the gun, I actually managed to break a couple of really fast flying, florescent orange disks called clay pigeons.

I was not so successful at my next stop, the archery range. I am normally a "right-eyed" person, but due to the cataracts, that was temporarily reversed. The Department instructors took this on as a challenge as they



Top: Teachers inspected, weighed and tagged white-footed mice at VCU's Rice Center. Pictured are Jason Courter, Christiansburg High School, and Patricia Hillis, Courtland High School. **Left:** Dr. Bill McShea, Research Scientist, Wildlife Conservation Society and Smithsonian Institution, explains how to safely handle small mammals for data collection purposes to [an amused] Sallie Hill. **Above:** One clay egg (gray) was placed alongside real eggs in artificial nests to determine rates of nest predation across different habitats. Tooth marks imbedded in clay eggs provide clues to predator identity.

tried to help me. In all honesty, it was a funny sight. They would get me lined up at something that was just a blur and say, "Let go!" I never even came close to a target. Our last event was fishing, and I caught nothing, yet, I had caught the fever of outdoor education. The events at Amelia changed my perspective on many things. As a culminating event for the evening, we were treated to a delicious cookout with some famous food, particularly the fruit cobbler, from renown Department chefs.

I got up Friday morning and looked out my dorm window. The construction workers were starting to seem like family, and I was not ready to say goodbye. The well-used VCU vans took us once more to the Rice Center, where VCU and VDGIF biologists led us in a bird census. The weather was clear and beautiful, and although we were long past the hours to normally hear many birds, their cooperation was evident. With our final classroom instruction that afternoon we learned to use Arc View GIS software to create spatial databases and maps with the data we had collected all week. We said our good-byes and departed for our homes across the state of Virginia.



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Top: Teachers participate in bird point counts at the VCU Rice Center to develop census data. **Left:** Learning the how-tos of shooting takes patience and proper instruction as demonstrated by Lt. Scott Renalds, VDGIF game warden, and Linda Melton, Gar-Field Senior High School in Woodbridge. **Lower left:** Jason Courter weighs a white-footed mouse as Steven Shobe, Powhatan Junior High School, records the data.



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I am a changed person as a result of that week. I had cataract surgery after returning home, and although I see differently, I retain the gratitude for the ability to see the beautiful, vivid colors of the world around me. I feel as though I've been given a second chance. I applied for and received a grant to implement watershed and wildlife studies into my classroom this year. I have formed an educational partnership with Koppers Industries, a company located across the road from my school, and together we have adopted a mile and a half of the Roanoke River. Koppers employees and Glenvar sixth graders recently spent a day cleaning the river together, gathering two pick-up trucks full of trash in a matter of hours. I will be purchasing materials to implement the Save Our Streams protocol to monitor the health of Little Bear Rock Branch, a small, spring-fed creek originating on the moun-

tain behind our school. This creek is being threatened by encroaching development, and our documentation may be imperative to insure its continued health. Using the grants and other resources, I have purchased a set of GPS units to use with my students. Soon we will be outside mapping the trails in our wooded area and creating documentation to manage and conserve the wildlife populations found on our school grounds. "Virginia Woods, Waters and Wildlife," provided through the cooperation of Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and Virginia Commonwealth University, bestowed on me a unique experience that changed my perspective as a science teacher. Thank you to all who made it possible. I can only hope this class will continue for years to come. □

Beth Sellers is a science teacher at Glenvar Middle School in Salem, Virginia.



The Three S's

*If you're looking to
persuade an
elusive gobbler to
come your way—
Sit still, Softly call
and Shut up!*

by Bruce Ingram

It was the spring of 1986, and a friend and I had decided to take our initial plunge into spring gobbler hunting—a pastime that our peers had been raving about. Before sunrise one April morn, Paul and I drove to the Jefferson National Forest in Craig County, waited for dawn to break, and then we squawked out some yelps on a box call. To our surprise, a gobbler answered, and we went charging after him.

For the next hour or so, every time the tom gobbled from a different position, we relocated and tried to move ever closer. After moving three times, my buddy and I heard the bird gobbling from finger ridges we had just left. That tom was looking for trouble but we were too inexperienced to realize it. Finally, we repositioned once too often, stumbled across the longbeard and sent him pitching down the mountain. And so did our efforts most of that spring.

Part of the appeal of hunting during the spring turkey season is having the chance to enjoy the beauty of spring.

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For A Successful TURKEY HUNT

Come 1987, Paul and I decided that we needed help from an expert—a gentleman who had killed three birds in seven seasons—a true be-gizzled pro to our way of thinking. Our expert convinced us that we needed to run and gun even more authoritatively. He proclaimed that the best tactic was to run directly toward a gobbling bird until the hunter was within a hundred yards of his quarry. Then the hunter was to yelp and cut as loud as he could to “get that long-beard all wound up.” Never mind that real hens rarely announce themselves in such a vocal manner. On the outing with our turkey authority, we galloped right toward a gobbling bird and promptly spooked the turkey, which was in full strut and had actually been on his way toward us.

By 1988, Paul had given up on spring gobbler hunting—pronouncing it too difficult. I actually lucked into killing a Roanoke County tom by myself that spring and immediately decided that I too had become an expert. In 1989, I tried to duplicate the strategy that I had used to tag that initial tom, that is, yelping loudly, waiting until I heard a gobble, and then racing to the nearest tree to set up. Predictably, I failed to call in even one turkey that year.

Over the next 10 years, I consistently killed a Virginia tom or two every season, but the only reason for that success was because of my obsession to hunt every day of the season before school and every Saturday. As the old Southern saying goes: “Even a blind hog finds an acorn every now and then.” And I (a blind hog if ever there was one in the

turkey hunting realm) found acorns (or killed gobblers) only because I pursued them every day. My standard game plan remained what the so-called expert had tutored me on—run and gun hunting and loud calling.

Sometime during Virginia’s 2000 spring season, I had an epiphany—a revelation if you will. After I had spooked my umpteenth longbeard because of the run and gun gambit and after I had caused too many toms to veer away from my position because of obnoxious calling, I decided to change my turkey hunting ways.

One May morning before school, I heard six birds gobbling as I debarked from the car in the pre-dawn murk. Instead of rushing off after the sextet, which were about 150 yards away, I eased into the woods, set up against a Virginia pine, and waited for dawn to break—a drastically different approach from when in the dark, I used to hammer out yelps to roosted birds.

At daybreak, I deployed a slate call to emit a few tree yelps and when the toms gobbled in response, I did something revolutionary—at least for me—absolutely nothing. My silence caused all six of the longbeards



©Bruce Ingram

The author with a fine Botetourt County gobbler he took before school one morning. A reformed run-and-gunner and loud caller, Ingram now believes that soft calling makes for the best strategy.



©Bruce Ingram

to launch into a spasm of gobbling as they each tried to outdo the other. When I heard the sounds of birds leaving the roost and alighting on the ground, I used a diaphragm to vocalize a few polite yelps. Five minutes later, two longbeards in full strut were 15 and 20 yards from me. I shot the closer of the two—a tom that turned out to be four-years-old with a paintbrush beard and spurs that measured $1\frac{1}{8}$ and $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

I am not going to try to pretend that I have figured out how to always kill spring gobblers—being able to accomplish that will never happen for most of us and especially for me. But I have learned that following the Three S's approach has allowed me to consistently tag more toms and limit out early in the season instead of struggling to take one tom over the course of a whole season.

THE FIRST S: SIT STILL

Ask just about any Old Dominion spring gobbler hunter if he or she is able to sit perfectly still for long periods of time, and most of us—if we answer honestly—will admit that we can not do so. But I know of no other aspect of this pastime that is more crucial to our success than this one.

This fact first occurred to me after I had chased a longbeard all over a Botetourt County mountain for several hours. When the tom ambled up a mountain—so did I. When he went scudding down from a ridge—so did I. That Saturday morning was an unseasonably warm one and that tom had been the only game in town. Midway through the morning hours, I was too hot and exhausted to continue. I gave up the chase, sat down against a tree, called once, and rested—motionless, perhaps even dozing—for about a half hour.

I came out of my reverie when I heard the sounds of a gobbler drumming. Slowly tilting my head to the left, I saw the old boy in full strut—just 8 yards distant. Another minute or two elapsed before the turkey moved his head behind a poplar. And when his bright red, white and blue head emerged from behind the



©Bruce Ingram



©Dwight Dyke

You don't have to be a calling virtuoso in Virginia's spring gobbler woods. Learning to yelp and cluck on a mouth or friction call is often the only sounds you will need to utter to entice a wary tom.

tree, I touched off my 12-gauge autoloader.

Since that successful hunt, my most effective strategy has been just to sit still—totally still. Before resting my back against a hardwood (and both for safety sake and concealment purposes that tree should be wider

than our bodies), I trim any potential shot obstructing brush or twigs and remove all rocks, twigs and other debris from beneath where I will position a seat cushion. Then I sit down, rest my scattergun across both knees, call a few times, and promise myself that I won't move for 30 minutes to



©Bruce Ingram

an hour. Again, this is the single most effective turkey killing tactic that you can adapt.

THE SECOND S: SOFTLY CALL

Turkey calling in the Old Dominion's woods is vastly different from that which takes place at calling contests. For example, several years ago, a friend and I went afield with a veteran hunter and his son. Upon arriving at our destination, the dad and I

Before setting up for long periods of time, trim any obstructions and remove debris from where you will place your seat cushion. Performing these simple acts will make it easier for you to remain motionless for long periods of time.



©Bruce Ingram

went one direction while my buddy and the son ventured forth in another. At dawn, the older gentleman and I heard several gobblers on the roost.

The dad whispered to me that he was going to use a friction call to scratch out three light clucks, and he instructed me to emit two soft yelps—and only two—on my diaphragm. Those few persuasive sounds were all that were required for me to tag a nice two-year-old tom about 20 minutes after fly down.

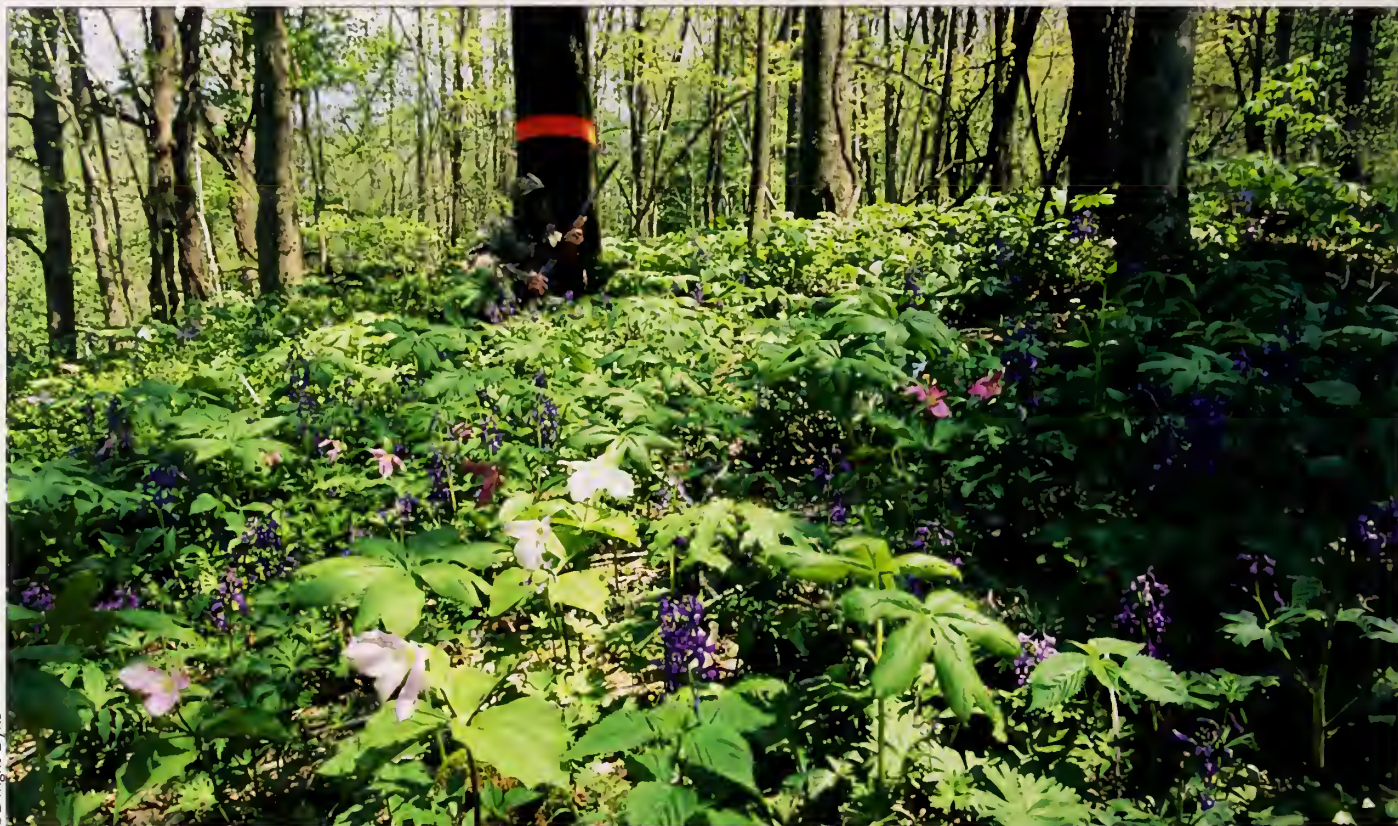
Meanwhile, the young man, a regular participant on the calling circuit, treated my friend to a virtuoso performance. He yelped, clucked, kee-keed, purred, cut and even threw in a few fighting purrs and gobbles—meanwhile rotating from among various box, slate, glass and mouth calls. The only drawback to the whole affair was that every time a tom started to come in, the turkey stopped to strut well out of range, thinking that such hot hens were duty bound to come to him. I have never seen my buddy so frustrated after a morning in the spring woods.

I am not at all knocking turkey calling contests—they are marvelous get-togethers that have much to offer the sporting public. Just remember that in the real woods, real hens most of the time utter a few soft yelps and clucks when they respond to a gobbler. And when we want a gobbler to respond to us and come within that magic 35 to 40-yard range, soft calling is the way to accomplish that goal.

THE THIRD S: SHUT UP FOR LONG PERIODS OF TIME

So many types of calls exist, and they all sound so fetching that the temptation is naturally there for us hunters—like the young man above—to make the fields and forests ring with our turkey music. Resist that temptation.

Most of the time in most situations, we should simply shut up with our calling and let turkey nature take its course. Here is a logical game plan for when you hear a tom on the roost.



For safety and concealment sake, find a wide tree to set up against. Even though blaze orange is not required during the spring season, it is always a good idea to mark the tree that you're hunting by and to wear blaze orange while walking through the woods.

A FOOLISH CONSISTENCY

As a high school English teacher, one of my favorite sayings is Emerson's "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." This proverb basically means that we should be flexible in life—and in turkey hunting.

For instance, sometimes the Three S's approach will not work. A prime example of this is when you hear a gobbler to your left and a hen to your right. If you do not call aggressively and challenge that hen to come to your position, then the chances are great that the hen and gobbler will commingle well away from you. Loudly yelp and cut and reel that hen in; maybe the gobbler will also then approach your position.

- ✓ Utter a few gentle tree yelps after a roosted gobbler has announced his presence. Don't call anymore until after fly down. That tom knows where you are, so be quiet.
- ✓ After fly down, emit a few clucks and a yelp or two and be silent for at least 30 minutes or so.
- ✓ After 30 minutes and if no more gobbling is heard, yelp several times and wait an hour before calling again.
- ✓ If you continue to hear random gobblers or even if you don't and are sure birds are in the area, continue to sit still and be quiet, calling softly only once or twice every hour. We humans may dwell in a world with time deadlines and high pressure jobs, but such is not the world of the wild turkey. That longbeard will many times eventually come to our position—just give him time.

- ✓ And by all means, when that longbeard is on his way and comes into sight only under one circumstance should you call again. And that is if for some reason the bird turns on you and begins to move away. Then quickly make a yelp, which may stop the bird and perhaps give you an opportunity for a shot.

Look, I am not going to pretend that I have spring gobbler hunting all figured out, no one I have ever met does. But I do strongly believe that the Three S's approach is a much more effective way to consistently tag toms than the all too standard run and gun, loud calling gambit. □

Bruce Ingram is the author of three books: The James River Guide, The New River Guide and The Shenandoah/Rappahannock Rivers Guide. For more information, contact Ingram at be_ingram@juno.com or Ecopress (800-326-9272) or www.ecopress.com.

Providing Water in Your Habitat at Home[®]

by Carol A. Heiser
illustrations by Spike Knuth

When was the last time you saw a thumbnail-sized frog sitting among wet leaves in your yard? How about a neon-colored dragonfly basking next to a sparkling pool, a butterfly lapping minerals from a mud puddle, or a hummingbird preening its feathers after a rain? These animals—and a wonderful variety of others—are all prospective visitors to the environment around your home, but their visit will be limited by the quality of the habitat components found there. Unfortunately, water is one of those critical elements in nature that seems to be missing from most people's yards. Apparently we've become so obsessively focused on maintaining impeccable lawns that we've entirely forgotten about our wild neighbors. By draining wet areas, diverting water off the property, removing every fallen leaf, and keeping the grass close-clipped, we're manicuring nature right out of the landscape.

Birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians and mammals all need a reliable source of accessible water to drink and carry out their life cycles, from breeding and egg-laying to finding food and raising their young. If you want to welcome wildlife to your yard and can picture a softer, less barren landscape that includes the sound of trickling water, read on.

Keep it Simple

There are several ways you can provide water sources for wildlife, and a habitat which contains more than one source is ideal. Where to start? If you've ever visited a garden show and looked for new ideas to use in your yard, you may have felt somewhat intimidated by the beautiful water garden displays. The more classy the show, of course, the more sophisticated the displays, which can include



A simple and inexpensive way to supply water for a variety of wildlife species is to use an old garbage can lid. Flip it upside-down and place a few rocks inside the lid. This will help to hold the lid in place and will offer extra perching space.

elaborate waterfalls, multi-lighted fountains, and complex rock work under splashing streams. The good news for wildlife gardeners, thankfully, is that a Habitat at Home® water feature doesn't have to be elaborate at all. If we take our cues from nature, we find that even the smallest puddles of water attract a variety of life. A shallow depression at the base of a tree trunk caressed by ferns can be a mini-oasis for tadpoles or salamanders. Bird baths outfitted with a small drip system will provide the tinkling sound of water so attractive to birds. A small pool with an inexpensive bubbler and an adjacent patch of groundcover invites small mammals or passing insects to stop for a sip. Even a trash can lid placed upside-down on the ground can serve as a water feature. As long as there is enough plant material nearby for escape cover and a bit of

shade from the summer sun, your water source is likely to be successful.

Make a Splash

Buying an inexpensive bird bath is a good place to start for a novice habitat gardener. Huge bird baths with deep bowls are unnecessary, however: We want a bird bath intended for small songbirds, not ducks! Choose a bird bath with a shallow bowl no deeper than two to three inches, and place a few stones in it that birds can easily perch on. Try suspending a bucket that has a small hole in the bottom over the bird bath, and fill the bucket occasionally when a garden hose is handy, to provide a tantalizing dripping sound that birds will want to investigate. Remember, too, that wildlife needs water year-round, not just in summer. To keep water from freezing, consider getting a bird bath heater or de-icer from a local garden shop or birding store. A good quality heater will shut itself off

when the bird bath is empty, and it should have a built-in thermostat and grounded plug. Avoid heaters that gobble electricity, as they can range from 50 to 250 watts.

When you're ready to graduate from a bird bath to an in-ground water feature, the best options are either a prefabricated liner or a flexible plastic liner. Prefab liners look like black bathtubs and come in assorted shapes and sizes. Be aware that most of them have straight, steep sides, which can make it difficult for small mammals or amphibians to escape if they fall in the water. Therefore, it's prudent to choose a liner that has at least one or two built-in, shallow shelves or levels where you can put potted, bog-loving plants and rocks that small critters can crawl over. The deepest part of the liner should be an average of 18 to 24 inches to accommodate submerged plants and overwintering fish.

A flexible plastic liner, on the other hand, will provide opportunities for more creativity, because it can be shaped to any depth or configuration. The most durable flexible liners are 30 to 45 mil plastic. When you dig the hole for this type of liner, design it so that at least one side of the water feature is very shallow for birds and amphibians, and include a 4- to 6-inch shelf for submerged plants.

Left: Spring peeper, *Pseudacris (Hyla) crucifer*.





to be non-native. Besides, it's not necessary! A water garden with naturalized edges and native aquatic plants will attract native dragonflies, snails, frogs and other organisms that will keep the habitat balanced.

Choose the Site Wisely

Providing cover near the water source can not be over-emphasized. Most wildlife is wary of predators and stays on the constant lookout for signs of danger, which could be a hawk, a fox, or free-roaming cats and dogs. As we look for the best arrangement of food, water and cover, our goal is to avoid extreme conditions. At one end of this extreme is the "naked bird bath" syndrome, where the bird bath stands forlorn in an expansive ocean of lawn, nary a creature in sight. Birds are usually hesitant to venture far out into the open; instead, they prefer a shrub or tree near the water where they can land first and see if the coast is clear. At the other extreme is a tiny water source practically smothered by thick vegetation. This is a great place for a cat or other stealthy predator to lie in wait.

Therefore, strive for a "happy medium." If the yard is very small with only a few foundation plants, try siting the water several feet from the plants, on a side of the house that won't be absolutely baked by the afternoon sun. On the other hand, if the plant material is very scattered throughout the yard—"there's a bush over here and a tree way over there"—choose one shrub or tree

to be the "anchor," and place the water feature about 5 to 10 feet away from it. If the yard is mostly grass with only a border of shrubs or trees, install the water feature near the edge of the vegetation. Constructing a brush pile or planting a couple of shrubs or small trees may be necessary to round out the habitat elements. Remember to include evergreens, which will provide winter cover as well.

Did You Know?—Mosquito Hot Spots

It takes a minimum of one week (or up to four weeks, depending on the species) for a mosquito egg to complete its life cycle and develop into a mature adult during the warmer spring and summer months when these insects breed. Since mosquitoes require quiet, still water for egg-laying and development, they are attracted to water that is allowed to stand or stagnate for an extended period of time. Contrary to popular opinion, however, wetlands are not entirely to blame, because these ecosystems are home to a wide variety of bird and insect species that form an intricate food web of checks and balances. Instead, the most prevalent—and probably least likely to be noticed—place for standing water around our homes is in the gutters, where leaves

Rules of Thumb

Whether you use a prefab liner or flexible plastic, be sure to call Miss Utility first before digging, to locate any electrical or phone lines. Put the water feature where it will get at least five hours of sun a day as well as some shade in the afternoon. Also, a good rule of thumb is to cover two-thirds of the surface area with plants, which will minimize algae growth and provide cover for aquatic organisms. Circulating the water with a submersible pump will ensure adequate oxygen and minimal mosquito growth (see the "Did You Know" section on this page for more about mosquitoes).

Refrain from adding goldfish to your water feature, because goldfish will eat many of the native, beneficial aquatic organisms you're trying to attract. Also, goldfish waste products increase the water's organic matter which can in turn promote excessive algae growth. In addition, goldfish may escape during a storm or flooding event and enter a local water body or stream, potentially introducing these non-native species into the environment. For the same reason, never purchase tadpoles or snails from pet stores or other suppliers, as these are bound



Above: Common whitetail dragonfly, *Libellula lydia*. **Right:** Pipevine swallowtail, *Battus philenor*.

and other accumulated debris trap roof runoff. Therefore, an easy way to help minimize mosquito problems is to clean the gutters out every year.

It's also a good idea to clean out bird baths at least once a week.

For larger water features you can install a re-circulating pump to keep the water moving, or place a "mosquito dunk" in the water.

Available at most garden supply centers, mos-

quito dunks are slow-release, pest-control disks which contain the active ingredient Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), a form of bacteria that kills mosquito- and black fly larvae but is nontoxic to other species.

Look in your yard for these other common mosquito hot spots: improperly drained flower pots, or dishes under pots where water collects; tarps placed over wood piles or equipment, where pockets of water have settled on the tarp surface; and pet dishes, old paint cans, buckets and any other containers in "forgotten" corners of the yard that might collect rainwater.

Incidentally, "bug zappers" (electrical fly traps) are not effective in controlling mosqui-

toes. Less than one percent of insects killed by zappers are mosquitoes, and black lights actually attract insects in more concentrated numbers rather than disperse them. These devices also unfortunately kill many important beneficial insects indiscriminately, most of which are non-biting, and some of which are predators that would ordinarily feed on... mosquitoes!

Learning More

Backyard Wildlife Habitat—a program of the National Wildlife Federation that offers online certification of school and home habitats. Their Web site offers great tips and how-to's at www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat.

BayScapes for Wildlife Habitat: a Homeowners Guide—an 11-page overview of habitat basics to get your project started. BayScapes is an environmental education initiative developed by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Chesapeake Bay Field Office. The ACB Web site contains numerous other fact sheets and publications on landscaping conservation practices, at www.acb-online.org (click on "Programs and Projects" and then "Watershed Protection").

Rain Gardens fact sheet—from the Virginia Department of Forestry at www.dof.virginia.gov (in the right sidebar under "Water Quality" heading, click on "Best Practices," then look in left sidebar for "Rain Gardens.")

The Complete Pond-Builder, by Helen Nash; c. 1996; Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., New York; 144 pages. □

Carol A. Heiser is a Wildlife Habitat Education Coordinator with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.



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Virginia
Naturally

When using water features that attract birds, it is always a good idea to make sure that you regularly clean them.

In the Land of Peanuts



With numerous
species and multiple
lakes, Suffolk is an
angler's dream
come true.



Previous page: Western Branch is the largest of the Suffolk lakes. It is well known for producing big fish including carp that exceed 20 pounds and 40 pound stripers. **Above:** Many of the Suffolk lakes offer bank anglers the opportunity to enjoy excellent fishing for crappie and other panfish.

by Marc N. McGlade

Just west of Virginia's Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge—a mere 20 miles from the North Carolina line—awaits an untapped bounty for Old Dominion anglers. Some of the best lakes in Virginia are located near

downtown Suffolk and are dubbed the Suffolk lakes. Welcome to Virginia's cotton country: Southside's quaint town of Suffolk.

The Suffolk lakes are made up of a series of interconnected lakes, including: Western Branch Reservoir, Lake Prince, Burnt Mills Reservoir, Speights Run, Lake Cohoon (sometimes spelled Cahoon), Lake Meade, Lake Kilby and the Lone Star Lakes (a series of 12 lakes—some interconnected—varying in size from three to 50 acres, totaling 490 acres).

Lake Cohoon, Lake Meade, Lake Kilby and Speights Run are water supply reservoirs owned by the City of Portsmouth, but located in Suffolk. Although Lake Kilby is a fine fishery, it is unfortunately now closed to public access for security reasons since 9-11. The City of Norfolk owns Burnt Mills Reservoir, Lake Prince and Western Branch Reservoir.

If you think we're trying to sell you oceanfront property in Arizona, think again. A closer look reveals the following state records from the Suffolk lakes: white perch (2 pounds, 8 ounces from Lake Prince), white catfish (7 pounds, 6 ounces from Western Branch Reservoir), carp (49 pounds, 4 ounces from Lake Prince), gar (25 pounds, 2 ounces from Lake Prince) and bowfin (16 pounds, 8 ounces from Lake Cohoon). How's that for variety?

Suffolk is sandwiched between Virginia's incredible saltwater fishing to the east and Lake Gaston and Buggs Island to the west. Oddly enough, the Suffolk lakes can be overlooked, despite their top-heavy rankings when it comes to the Old Dominion's trophy fish certificates.

These lakes provide drinking water to thousands of residents, but they also are tremendous fisheries, sometimes sneaking beneath the radar screen of anglers. On the other hand, locals in the know would just as soon keep it that way—they know the mother lode of fish have a Suffolk address.

When Hurricane Isabel dismantled Virginia back in September 2003, she left in her wake a plethora of new blowdowns for fish to utilize. Suffolk

©Marc McGlade



©Marc McGlade

lakes' fish species became the benefactors of the destruction. Anglers can use the new cover to their advantage, since many fish species have taken up residency along much of the new woody homes that Isabel built.

Burnt Mills Reservoir

An oldie but a goodie, Burnt Mills dates back to the early 1940s. This lake has two looks: the area near the dam is open and fairly wide, while the upper end is stumpy, shallow and, if you don't watch your navigation, the upper end can treat a boat like a pinball in an arcade game. Burnt Mills covers 610 surface acres and is situated in Isle of Wight County.

Lake Cohoon

Although Lake Cohoon's address is in Suffolk, the City of Portsmouth actually owns it (they also own Lake Meade, Lake Kilby and Speights Run, all four of which are water supply reservoirs). Lake Cohoon measures 510 acres and is a dynamo for bluegill, largemouth bass, chain pickerel, crappie and shellcracker. The Department even stocked walleye from 1995 through 1998. Its production of monster-size chain pickerel, particularly in wintertime, has been duly noted by the Department. Biologists say during this time, anglers catch several 6-pound chain pickerel. For that species, it is the top producer in the district. Specifically, between 1998 and 2002 a total of 66 trophy



At 610-acres Burnt Mills Reservoir is loaded with standing timber, blow-downs and towering cypress trees which all make for outstanding fishing. Using a fly rod with brightly-colored popping bugs, during the spring and summer months, is a great way to lure a hungry bluegill or largemouth bass. Photo ©Marc McGlade.

The primary tributary for Burnt Mills is Great Swamp, a dense cypress swamp (common for this area of Virginia). Fisheries biologists with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries indicate a good population of redeer (shellcracker), chain pickerel, bluegill, black crappie, largemouth bass and yellow perch.

chain pickerel were reported. It is also one of the district's top-producing lakes for big crappie.

Lake Meade

Whereas Lake Kilby is the long-in-the-tooth Portsmouth water supply lake, Lake Meade is the baby of the family as it was impounded in 1960.

- **Maps** – Virginia Atlas & Gazetteer by DeLorme, (800) 452-5931, www.delorme.com. The City of Norfolk Web site (www.norfolk.gov/utilities/resources/) has lake maps in Adobe Acrobat Reader format. Anglers are required to have a City of Norfolk boat permit (in addition to a Virginia freshwater fishing license) to launch private boats at Burnt Mills, Prince and Western Branch. These can be purchased through a mail-in form by visiting www.norfolk.gov/utilities/resources/.
- To learn more about the Suffolk lakes, contact the VDGIF district office in Chesapeake at (757) 465-6811, or visit www.dgif.virginia.gov online.
- Burnt Mills Reservoir has a primitive ramp, with limited parking, located adjacent to the dam off Route 603. Gas motors (up to 9.9 horsepower) are allowed. The City of Norfolk has amended their codes to allow boats with outboard motors larger than 9.9 horsepower to access the lake if the gas tanks are removed or the outboard is disabled (prop removed). Bank fishing is prohibited. A daily or annual boat permit is required from the City of Norfolk.
- The Lake Meade & Cohoon Bait & Tackle Shop, located at 1805

Pitchkettle Road (off Route 58), provides a paved boat ramp for both lakes, boat rentals, trolling motors, bait, tackle, beverages and snacks. The concession is open only on weekends during winter months but seven days a week otherwise. Gas motors as powerful as 9.9 horsepower are allowed. Bank fishing is limited to the shoreline at the fishing station, excluding the dam. For more information, call (757) 539-6216. A permit (daily or annual) from the City of Portsmouth is required for fishing or boating on their lakes (Cohoon, Meade, Kilby and Speights Run). These permits can be purchased at the Lake Meade & Cohoon Bait & Tackle Shop or through the City of Portsmouth Lake Kilby Water Treatment Plant, phone (757) 539-2201, ext. 0.

- Outboard motors with a maximum horsepower rating of 9.9 are allowed on Speights Run. Bank fishing is prohibited. There is a paved ramp on the lower lake—with limited parking—located at the dam on Route 688.
- Lake Prince's boat ramp is located on Route 604 (Lake Prince Road), off Route 460 at Providence Church. Bank fishing is restricted to a small area around the ramp. Lake Prince is open sunrise to sunset, year-round. Gas motors as big as 9.9 horsepower are allowed. The City of Norfolk has amended their codes to allow boats with outboard motors larger than 9.9 horsepower to access the lake if the gas tanks are removed or the outboard is disabled (prop removed). A daily or annual boat permit is required from the City of Norfolk.



Striped bass fishing on Lake Prince; ©Marc McGlade



Bank fishing on Lake Cohoon; ©Marc McGlade

- Western Branch Reservoir has two places to launch boats; one just below the Burnt Mills Dam off Route 603 near Everets, and another below the Lake Prince Dam on Route 605 near Providence Church. Bank fishing is prohibited. Gas motors up to 9.9 horsepower are allowed. The City of Norfolk has amended their codes to allow boats with outboard motors larger than 9.9 horsepower to access the lake if the gas tanks are removed or the outboard is disabled (prop removed). Western Branch Reservoir is open sunrise to sunset, year-round. A daily or annual boat permit is required from the City of Norfolk.



Left: Nicholas Barone, a third grader from Nansemond Parkway Elementary School in Suffolk, is an old pro at fishing the Suffolk Lakes. Last October, while fishing Burnt Mills with his dad, Nicholas landed this really big and toothy chain pickerel.

Lake Meade was constructed on the main stem of the Nansemond River.

Lake Meade is horseshoe shaped with Lake Kilby and Speights Run on one arm and Lake Cohoon on the other. Lakes Meade and Cohoon are separated by a stair-stepped dam. Lake Meade covers 512 surface acres, with a maximum depth of 25 feet.

Shellcrackers abound, and some of them are bruisers. This lake is a good destination for stripers, which are stocked annually, at a rate of 25 per acre (12,800 total).

Other inhabitants include bluegill, largemouth bass and crappie. Department electrofishing sampling indicates Lake Meade has a good supply of big shellcrackers and largemouth bass.

Speights Run

Speights Run is a 197-acre lake that overflows into Lake Kilby. The lake is separated into two sections, split by Route 645 (Manning Road), off Route 58 in Suffolk. The upper section is closed to public fishing because there is no public access.

Although Speights Run is small, good things can sometimes come from small packages. This lake's residents include bluegill, largemouth bass, crappie and shellcracker. Shellcrackers are perhaps the most noteworthy species in the lake, and largemouth bass in the 12- to 15-inch range are abundant. Biologists say this lake receives very little fishing pressure; therefore, angling success rates are generally high.

Lake Prince

Lake Prince is the second largest of the Suffolk lakes at 777 acres. It is one of the water supply lakes owned by the City of Norfolk and offers anglers the chance to catch a variety of fish including striped bass, largemouth bass, bluegill, shellcracker and chain pickerel.

Upper right: Lakes Meade and Cohoon are separated by a unique stair-stepped dam. **Right:** Big shellcrackers thrive in many of the Suffolk lakes.

Lake Prince is one of the older Norfolk lakes; it was impounded in 1925. Two major swamps (Ennis and Carbell) feed Lake Prince. The upper portions of these swamps are dense cypress forests.

Striped bass have been stocked annually since 1970 and the lake record is just shy of 36 pounds. The Department stocks approximately 25 fish per acre (19,425 total) annually.

Catch rates from gill net samples indicate the striper population ranks second in southeast Virginia, behind Western Branch Reservoir. The best striper fishing is in late fall, winter and early spring. Studies indicate the aeration system installed in the lake

in the early 1990s may be improving striped bass survival by increasing suitable habitat during the summer months.

Lake Prince has a healthy largemouth bass population and, on average, produces about 50 trophy bass each year. Bluegill and shellcracker are abundant in Lake Prince and as a result, produce about 150 trophy sunfish annually.

Fishing is best for largemouth bass in spring and fall, for redear sunfish in spring and for bluegills in summer. However, all of these fish can be caught year-round. There are also black crappie in the lake that willingly bite best in the spring and



©Marc McGlade

©Marc McGlade



Speights Run may be small, but this 197-acre lake can offer big surprises for anglers.

fall. Some big chain pickerel are caught during the cooler months.

Western Branch Reservoir

Western Branch Reservoir spans 1,579 acres, and is the largest of the Suffolk lakes. Like Lake Prince, the reservoir is owned by the City of Norfolk, and provides Southside and Tidewater anglers with an incredible fishery. Its moniker stems from the stream on which it was impounded in 1962: the western branch of the Nansemond River.

This horseshoe-shaped lake has Lake Prince upstream on one arm and Burnt Mills Reservoir upstream on the other.

Western Branch provides anglers the opportunity to catch a wide variety of species such as largemouth bass, shellcracker, bluegill, black crappie, white perch, yellow perch and chain pickerel. In addition to these naturally reproducing fish, the lake is stocked with striped bass and

muskellunge. Of the 22 species for which the Department issues trophy citations, an astonishing 13 inhabit Western Branch Reservoir.

Western Branch is among the top waters in the state for trophy sunfish, white perch, yellow perch and largemouth bass. The lake also has a healthy crappie population.

This outstanding reservoir has been stocked with stripers every year since 1975. The Department stocks approximately 25 fish per acre—or 39,475 total—annually. Based on population sampling, the reservoir's striped population is the best in the district. The lake record striped weighed in at 41½ pounds.

Fisheries biologists say fall and winter months are best for the striped fishing at Western Branch and good numbers are also caught in the spring below the spillways from Lake Prince and Burnt Mills Reservoir. During the summer months, stripers are known to concentrate themselves around the aerators and in the main creek channels.

The oddball species in the swampy region of Suffolk is the muskellunge. Muskies have been

stocked at Western Branch as a trophy fish dating back to 1983. Some monsters between 30 and 40 pounds have paid a visit to the landing cradle.

Enough Said

Prince and Western Branch certainly receive the most ink and have the most notoriety, but any of these lakes can be extremely productive for anglers who venture to Virginia's cotton country.

The Suffolk lakes beckon visitors to cast a line in their fertile waters. Scenic shorelines, clean water and wildlife watching adds to the mystique that is the Suffolk lakes.

Indeed, the Suffolk lakes are hidden in plain view. This area of Virginia is flatter than a doormat flounder, full of cotton fields, soybeans, peanuts and oh yeah, fat largemouth bass, and stripers, and muskies, and shellcrackers, and crappies, and ... □

Marc McGlade is a writer and photographer from Midlothian. Marc is a regular contributor to Virginia Wildlife, Game & Fish, FLW Outdoors, North Carolina Sportsman, The Sportsman's Magazine and other national and regional publications.

Talking Turkey

When it comes to conservation the National Wild Turkey Federation knows how to strut their stuff.





Lee Walker

Last year the NWTF, VDGIF and the Fairfax County Park Authority celebrated Thanksgiving and America's outdoor heritage by releasing several wild turkeys to find a new home at Huntley Meadow Park in Alexandria.

by King Montgomery

The week before last Thanksgiving, members of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) released eight wild turkeys at the Fairfax County Park Authority's Huntley Meadows Park near Alexandria. Spectators, many of them children bused to the event, were spellbound as cage doors were opened and the large birds flew to their freedom. The release symbolized not only Thanksgiving, and the many blessings for which we all are thankful, but also the success of the reintroduction of wild turkeys into the environments where they once were plentiful. And that success is due in large part to the dedicated volunteers and staff of the NWTF.

The NWTF is comprised of almost 500,000 members in all 50 states, Canada, and a dozen other countries. This grassroots, nonprofit organization supports scientific wildlife management on public, private and corporate lands; and it promotes wild turkey hunting as a traditional part of American hunting heritage.

Founded in Fredericksburg in 1973, the NWTF moved a few years later to its current headquarters in Edgefield, SC. At the time of the founding of NWTF, there were estimated one million wild turkeys nationwide, and almost one-and-a-half million turkey hunters. The NWTF with its many volunteers and partners that included landowners, governments and industry brought everyone together to improve turkey habitat and reintroduce this great bird back into its traditional niches in the ecosystems across North America. Today almost six-and-a-half million turkeys are hunted by over two-and-a-half million people. This rebound in turkey numbers is remarkable considering this magnificent bird—Ben Franklin proposed it as our national bird, but lost to the bald eagle advocates—numbered fewer than 30,000 a hundred years ago.

Habitat destruction and unchecked commercial and sport hunting harvests contributed to the wild turkeys near demise. Fortunately, NWTF, authorities, landowners and business partners intervened to turn things around. The beginning of the resurrection of the wild turkey began in 1937 with the passage of the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. This law places taxes on firearms, ammunition, bows, arrows and other hunting equipment. The funds garnered are returned to the state agencies responsible for wildlife conservation and management. The tax has raised billions of dollars for wildlife restoration, and it is still in effect today.

NWTF, through its hundreds of state and province chapters, conducts outreach training and hunts for disabled hunters through the Wheel-in' Sportsman program; for youth via the popular JAKES (Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics, and Sportsmanship) program; and for women through the Women in the Outdoors (WITO). Each program has its own national and regional staffs and thousands of dedicated volunteers. They publish interesting and informative magazines that complement the NWTF's *Turkey Call* magazine.

Virginia has more than 60 chap-

ters spread throughout the Old Dominion, and many have engaging names such as the Alleghany Highlands Limbhangers, the Botetourt Longbeards, the Gray Ghost Gobblers, the Nansemond Longspurs, and the Staunton River Strutters. The chapter closest to me is one of the most active: the National Capital Chapter.

I had the pleasure of attending a WITO event sponsored by the National Capital Chapter in Northern Virginia. I was very impressed with the outdoors orientation and training the women received during the day's activities. Over a hundred women split into groups to learn to shoot pistols, rifles, shotguns and bows; or were introduced to spinning and fly fishing; or attended courses on outdoor survival, camping, map reading, mountain biking and other outdoor disciplines. Some of the women I spoke with said they attend many WITO events so they can participate in all of the subjects offered. I was also greatly impressed by the enthusiasm and quality of the instructors who



©John R. Ford



Dave Coffman

The first Virginia Wheelin' Sportsman Hunt, held last year in Charlottesville, devised a team approach to take wheelchair-mobile hunters spring turkey hunting. The NWTF *Wheelin' Sportsman Program* provides opportunities for handicapped hunters and fishermen to participate in a variety of outdoor adventures. The success of this unique program is due to the dedication of fellow sportsmen and women volunteering to share their hunting time to see that others have the opportunity to get out in the woods and participate in this awesome experience.

were all volunteers from the Izaak Walton League, Trout Unlimited, the VDGIF, and the NWTF. I learned a lot that fine day.

The NWTF chapters in the Old Do-

minion are active in the following general areas:

- Habitat enhancements.
- Education from youth to adult.
- Hunting heritage.

- Hunter safety.
- Turkey restoration.
- Women's programs.
- JAKES youth programs.
- Wheelin' Sportsman.
- Land purchase.
- Research.

If you would like more information or to join NWTF, see the Web site at <http://www.nwtf.org> or call 1-800-THE-NWTF. The Virginia arm of NWTF is at <http://www.vanwtf.com> or contact President Curtis Breeding at (276) 964-4537 or Vice President Ronnie Lambrich at (540) 543-2140. For WITO information contact Linda Layser at (703) 425-6665; for JAKES information call Billy Hall at (540) 463-5410; and for Wheelin' Sportsman contact Robin Clark, (434) 979-6154. □

Freelance writer/photographer King Montgomery is a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife. King believes that regulated hunting is an effective game management tool that benefits the environment, and allows our American hunting heritage to be passed on by hunters, anglers and other users of our grand outdoors. He lives in Burke with his wife, Elizabeth Grant.





Journal

2005 Outdoor Calendar of Events

April 22-24: *Becoming an Outdoors Woman® (BOW)*, Holiday Lake 4-H Camp, Appomattox. For more information contact Jimmy Mootz at 804-367-0656 or e-mail Jimmy.Mootz@dgif.virginia.gov.

July 8-10: *Virginia Outdoors Weekend*, Twin Lakes State Park, Green Bay. For more information contact Jimmy Mootz at 804-367-0656 or e-mail Jimmy.Mootz@dgif.virginia.gov.

August 26-28: *Mother-Daughter Outdoors*, Holiday Lake 4-H Educational Center, Appomattox. For more information contact Jimmy Mootz at 804-367-0656 or e-mail Jimmy.Mootz@dgif.virginia.gov. □



Leave Your Sample at the Door, Please...

by Jennifer Worrell

DNA testing doesn't just happen in general law enforcement or on the popular television drama CSI. Page County Game Warden Neil Kester used this investigative method to his advantage recently to solve a deer poaching case. Kester and several fellow officers had staged a decoy operation late one evening to help alleviate night hunting in the area. They had waited patiently in the cold fall air when a truck approached. The wardens' persistence proved worthy when the driver slowed the vehicle; the passenger in the front seat handed a loaded firearm to the driver, while the man in the backseat looked on. The driver then proceeded to shoot at the decoy.

When the "deer" didn't fall or run away as these animals generally do at the sound of gunfire, the perpetrator reloaded and fired again. When the "deer" continued to stand good-naturedly as if waiting for the third shot, the driver finally realized something was amiss and sped away.

Kester's comrades hurried off in pursuit. The errant driver must have decided to clear away some evidence as he threw an empty beer bottle at a road sign while the officers were chasing him. When the wardens finally blocked the truck and ended

the chase, the driver and passengers ran. The officers caught the passengers—the man in the backseat actually owned the truck, and the man in the front seat was a convicted felon with a cased stolen gun. The driver, however, still remained elusive.

The driver's escape did not prove terribly problematic for Kester. The pursuing officers remembered where the beer bottle had landed and took Kester to pick it up for DNA testing. Technicians at the lab later told Kester that the beer bottle proved to be one of the best DNA hits they had ever had. The sample on the bottle offered more than enough evidence to charge the driver—he was also a convicted felon. Won't these people ever learn? □

The Virginia Fly Fishing Festival

by Beau Beasley

This spring, enjoy a weekend of family fun at the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival, on the banks of the South River in Waynesboro. Since its start four years ago, the event has quickly grown and has become the largest fly-fishing event in the state, drawing anglers and vendors from all over the Old Dominion and as far away as New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland and North Carolina. Another advantage to attending this year's Virginia Fly Fishing Festival is that a portion of the proceeds raised from the event will go to fund conservation efforts on the South River.

This year's festival speakers include Fly Fishing Hall of Famer Bob Clouser as well as award-winning outdoor writer King Montgomery. Also on hand will be international guide Harry Robertson of Hanover



"Stop playing with the box call, Jimmie, you'll scare the turkeys."

Fly Fishers and outdoor writer Beau Beasley. Other notable speakers include Dusty Wissmath, Brain Shumaker, Cory Routh, and Capt. Gary DuBiel. Master fly tyers Harrison Steves, Blane Chocklett, Walt Carey, and Capt. Tommy Mattioli will demonstrate their techniques.

Admission to the festival is \$8 for adults and free for children 16 and under with an accompanying adult. For an additional \$6, attendees can enjoy the all-day wine tasting. You can even take home a souvenir wine-tasting festival glass. Don't miss the 5th Annual Virginia Fly Fishing Festival on April 16 and 17 on the banks of the South River in Waynesboro, Virginia. For more information, visit the festival Web site at www.vaflyfishingfestival.org. □

Wild Letters

Like Father, Like Son

by Donald M. Thompson

In May of 1972 my uncle, Robert B. Ellison, who at the time was chief of police for Colonial Heights, sent *Virginia Wildlife* magazine a picture of the first turkey I ever killed, while on a hunting trip with my father. At that time I was 11 years old. The picture



appeared in the August 1972 issue, on page 24. I was sent three copies and have always treasured them along with the time spent with my father.

I am now 43 years old and have a son named Drew, who on Saturday April 24, 2004, at the age of 11 killed his first turkey. It weighed 18 pounds, 8 ounces, with an 11 inch beard and 1 inch spurs.

Drew and I had been hunting together for the past three seasons, but he never carried a gun. He received his first shotgun Christmas 2003, and put it to good use during the designated Youth Hunting Day, April 3, of 2004. It was a great day, but we were unsuccessful. Two weeks later, we would go on another turkey hunting trip that the both of us will never forget.

Drew and I left home that morning around 5:15. The sky was cloudy and the temperature was a warm 58 degrees. We had made several stops that morning on a couple of farms that we have written permission to hunt on. On the fourth stop at Mr. Spiers farm, about 7:05 a.m., near the Sussex and Dinwiddie county line we heard a bird gobble. It was on the ground in a three-acre field surrounded by mixed hardwood on two sides and a 15-year-old pine plantations on the other two sides. Drew and I found a good spot on the edge of the field that gave us a clear view of the field where we set up. I took out my slate call and made a few clucks and purrs. The turkey answered immediately. We waited for about 20 minutes and did not hear the bird again. Finally the gobbler appeared at the edge of the field directly across from us and was heading in our direction. Drew lifted his gun and placed the sight on the turkey. He asked if he could take off the safety and I told him wait until the turkey is 40 yards away. The turkey continued heading straight for us until he was about 12 steps away. I made a cluck with a mouth call and the turkey stuck his head straight up and Drew made his shot. The turkey fell and Drew yelled, "I got him Dad!"

This was the greatest hunt that I have ever been on, with the possible exception of the morning that my father called up that first turkey for me to kill. □

Book Review

by Marika Byrd

Fishing the Shenandoah Valley: An Angler's Guide

M. W. Smith

University of Virginia Press,
Charlottesville and London

Paperback, 6" X 8"

ISBN: 0-8139-2228-3

\$12.95

www.upress.virginia.edu

With the knowledge of M. W. Smith, your landing more catfish, bluegill, crappie or largemouth bass anywhere in the Shenandoah Valley could be easier than you think. This booklet slips easily into your fishing gear as a quick reference. It has black and white photographs by Dwight Dyke, whom you recognize as a frequent contributor to the *Virginia Wildlife* magazine.

From the Allegheny Mountains of the west through the Shenandoah River drainage system, you receive an in-depth tour that takes you county by county through the regional stocked trout streams, and it provides contact information as well as access points. Smith covers spring and winter fishing, tips on river rapids, float details, etc. Lakes Frederick and Shenandoah as well as the Shenandoah National Park are covered in this volume. Information on local services, and where to camp are outlined. So that you know what you have caught, detailed fish descriptions are included.

Smith is Associate Professor of English at Bluefield State College and the author of *Fishing the New River Valley: An Angler's Guide* (Virginia), *Fishing the Roanoke Valley: An Angler's Guide* (Virginia). □

Festivals That Are

For The Birds!



Indigo bunting. ©Maslowski Photo

by Jeff Trollinger

Looking for an opportunity to learn about birds? There are more opportunities in Virginia now than ever before. You can see great places like the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, or the scenic New River with an expert birder to guide you. Three major festivals across the Commonwealth attract some of the best birders to lead trips to some of the best birdwatching spots. Birds and Blossoms Weekend, in the City of Norfolk, and the Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival, in Giles County, are held annually in the spring. The Eastern Shore Birding Festival, in Northampton and Accomack counties, takes place in the fall each year. Now is the time to make plans. Each festival has a variety of

great trips to choose from, and most include activities for children. Visit these festivals' Web sites for registration and event information.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries supports festivals to encourage Virginians and visitors to experience native and migratory birds. By co-sponsoring these festivals, the Department is helping to raise awareness, to provide opportunities for enjoyment, and to educate the public about conserving valuable habitats that benefit wildlife resources. After the experience of seeing a majestic bald eagle feeding young in the nest, the importance of Virginia's wildlife resources becomes a reality. Every festival brings its own special moments and surprises.

Beyond the benefits to participants, birding festivals benefit local communities. By preserving natural habitats that attract birds and other wildlife, these communities can reap the rewards of their conservation efforts. In one weekend, the Eastern Shore Birding Festival brings over \$100,000 into the rural economy of Northampton County, Virginia. In Port Aransas, Texas, birders bring over \$5 million annually into a community of just over 3,300 people. Birding festivals are a win-win for the Department, birders and communities.

So, grab your jacket, your binoculars and head for the car. These festivals are for the birds...and you'll have a great time too! □



Chesapeake Bay at Fleeton. ©Dwight Dyke

Birding Opportunities Information

For birding opportunities, travel the Virginia Wildlife and Birding Trail.
www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/vbwt

For More Festival Information

Birds and Blossoms
May 5-8, 2005

www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org

Mountain Lake Migratory Bird Festival
May 20-22, 2005

www.mountainlakebirding.com

Eastern Shore Birding Festival
Oct 7-9, 2005
www.esvachamber.org/birding.htm



Norfolk Botanical Garden. ©Dwight Dyke

RECIPES

by Joan Cone

How To Enjoy Wild Turkey Thighs

Were it not for hunters, the wild turkey might have vanished. License dollars and the National Wild Turkey Federation have saved this delicious bird and restored it to abundance.

Wild turkey breast meat is like that of farm raised fowl. Thighs and legs are tough, and some hunters discard them. The thighs and top section of the legs can be made tender and flavorful in your crockpot.

Menu

Cranberry Spread
Barbecued Wild Turkey Thighs
Sweet Potato Casserole
Creamy Cauliflower
Old-Fashioned Cheesecake

Cranberry Spread

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons concentrated orange juice
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 zest of an orange
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped pecans (optional)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped dry cranberries
- Assorted crackers

In an electric mixer bowl, combine the first four ingredients on medium speed until smooth. Fold in orange zest, pecans and cranberries. Refrigerate. Serve with crackers. Makes $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of spread.

Barbecued Wild Turkey Thighs

- 2 uncooked wild turkey thighs with just top part of legs
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup molasses
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup vinegar
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup catsup
 - 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
 - 1 tablespoon instant minced onion
- Sprinkle turkey with salt and pepper and place in crockpot. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over turkey. Cover and cook on LOW heat for 5 to 7 hours or until tender. Makes 4 servings.

Sweet Potato Casserole

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup firmly packed brown sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
- 3 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
- 4 tablespoons butter or margarine, divided

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped pecans
- 2 cups miniature marshmallows

Preheat oven to 375°F . Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar, orange juice, vanilla and 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice in a large bowl. Add sweet potatoes; toss to coat. Transfer to a 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Dot with 2 tablespoons butter. Cover and bake 45 minutes or until potatoes are slightly tender. Meanwhile, mix flour, remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice in medium bowl. Cut in remaining 2 tablespoons butter with a fork until crumbly. Stir in pecans and marshmallows. Remove casserole from oven and stir gently to coat potatoes in syrup; top with marshmallow-crumb topping. Bake, uncovered, another 7 to 10 minutes or until potatoes are tender and topping is golden brown. Makes 10 ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup) servings.

Creamy Cauliflower

- 1 medium head of cauliflower (2 pounds) cut into florets
- 3 tablespoons light cream cheese spread
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried dill weed
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Cook cauliflower in boiling water for 10 minutes or until tender; drain. Place in food processor container. Add cream cheese spread and dill weed. Cover and process until smooth. Serve topped with Parmesan cheese. Makes 4 servings.

Old-Fashioned Cheesecake

- 1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup almonds
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1 pound fresh ricotta cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup half and half cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dried currants

Preheat oven to 325°F . Press pie crust into a 9-inch round springform pan. Use a food processor to grind almonds finely and place them in a large bowl. Add butter and sugar and work in until smooth. Add nutmeg, salt and egg. When thoroughly combined, add ricotta cheese and cream and keep mixing until well blended. Stir in currants. Spoon filling into crust and bake at 325°F until filling is just set, 60 to 70 minutes. Let cool for an hour before serving. Serves 8. □



On The Water

by Jim Crosby



Overboard Discharge

I sense that much confusion exists among boaters about what can be legally discharged overboard from vessels in Virginia. While it can be a smelly and distasteful subject, someone has to tackle it and I am told it goes with the objective of serving my boating readers.

It all starts with a section (9 VAC 25-71-10) in the Virginia Code entitled "Regulations Governing the Discharge of Sewage and Other Wastes From Boats" from Virginia's State Water Control Board. The regulations were adopted January 6, 2003, and became effective April 23, 2003. They were amended August 31, 2004, and the amendments became effective November 3, 2004.

To a great degree, the Virginia regulations incorporate the Federal regulations by reference to 40 CFR Part 140 (2004).

The regulations start off by saying "No person shall discharge **other wastes** from any vessel on any navigable or non-navigable waters into state waters. This provision **shall not** prohibit discharges incidental to the normal operation of a vessel and shall not be applicable to the harvesting of seafood and fisheries products."

The clue to understanding this regulation is found in the reading of the definitions of "other wastes" and "Discharges incidental to the normal operations of a vessel."

"Other Waste means decayed wood, sawdust, shavings, bark, lime, garbage, refuse, ashes, offal, tar, oil, chemicals, and all other substances, except industrial waste and sewage, which may cause pollution in any state waters."

"Discharges incidental to the normal operation of a vessel means discharges of graywater (galley, bath and

shower water), bilge water, cooling water, weather deck runoff, ballast water, oil water separator effluent, and any other discharge from a properly functioning marine engine or propulsion system, shipboard maneuvering system, crew habitability system, or installed major equipment, such as an aircraft carrier elevator or catapult, or from a protective, preservative, or adsorptive application to the hull of a vessel, or a discharge in connections with the testing, maintenance, and repair of a system described above whenever the vessel is waterborne. It does not include a discharge of rubbish, trash, garbage, other such material discharged overboard or pollution."

Specifically, let's discuss sewage discharge. "Vessels with installed toilets and marine sanitation devices shall be in compliance with federal regulations which set standards for sewage discharges from marine sanitation devices. Vessels without installed toilets or without installed marine sanitation devices shall not directly or indirectly discharge sewage into state waters. Sewage and other wastes from self-contained, portable toilets or other containment devices shall be pumped out at pump-out facilities or carried ashore for treatment in facilities approved by the Virginia Department of Health."

Lastly, let's talk about "No Discharge Zones." The only zone established in Virginia is Smith Mountain Lake "from the dam upstream to the 795.0-foot contour (normal pool elevation) in all tributaries, including waters to above the confluence with Back Creek in the Roanoke River arm, and to the Brooks Mill Bridge (Route 834) on the Blackwater River arm."

This designation brings into force

some additional regulations such as "all discharge of sewage, whether treated or not, and other wastes from all vessels into designated No Discharge Zones is prohibited. Additionally, Y-valves, macerator pump valves, or any other through-hull fitting valves capable of allowing a discharge of sewage from marine sanitation devices shall be secured in the closed position by a device that is not readily removable, including, but not limited to, a numbered container seal, such that through-hull sewage discharge capability is rendered inoperable."

Finally, "Every owner or operator of a marina within a designated No Discharge Zone shall notify boat patrons leasing slips of the sewage restriction in the No Discharge Zone. As a minimum, notification shall consist of No Discharge Zone information in the slip rental contract and a sign indicating the area is a designated No Discharge Zone."

As you might suspect, this is a brief overview and does not constitute a complete and legal interpretation of the law. I can only recommend that you not discharge anything overboard that does not naturally exist in the water in which you are boating by keeping your bilge clean, your trash bag handy and do your maintenance and re-fueling ashore when possible. When re-fueling afloat, use the automatic cut-off and hold an absorbent cloth under the over-flow vent.

Remember, our goal should be to keep our boating waters clean enough to swim among the fish and maybe catch one or two for consumption. □

I always appreciate your feedback, questions and/or suggestions sent to jimcrosby@aol.com.

story and illustration
by Spike Knuth

Black-Throated Blue Warbler *Dendroica caerulescens*

April marks the arrival to, or the migration through Virginia of a variety of birds. Among them are the small, active, colorful warblers. You may see them from the Dismal Swamp to the Piedmont forests, to the Blue Ridge, and far Southwest Virginia. One such bird is the black-throated blue warbler, which migrates from its wintering grounds in the Bahamas and Caribbean Coasts.

The black-throated blue warbler is an eastern species that is rare west of the Mississippi River except for along the Pacific Coast. One of the unusual facts about this bird is that the sexes are completely different in appearance. So different were they that early naturalists, including Audubon, thought they were separate species, giving the female the name "pine swamp warbler."

Actually Virginia has two forms of this warbler. The *Dendroica caerulescens caerulescens*, which migrate through Virginia to breeding grounds in northern states and Canada. The mountain form, *D. c. Cairnsi*, nests in the higher elevations from Pennsylvania and Maryland, south in the Alleghenies, Appalachians, along the Blue Ridge into northern Georgia. The area is known as the Canadian Zone because of its climate and vegetation types, which are similar to more northerly climes, and hosts many birds that normally breed farther north.

Those black-throated blue warblers that migrate through Virginia are the more numerous. The male has blue upperparts; brownish-black wings with a conspicuous white patch at the base of the primaries. The throat, sides of the face, and sides of

the body are black, with the rest of the underparts white. The female has olive-green upper parts, with its wings showing the distinctive white patch, and a yellowish streak above the eye. The undersides are buffy to yellowish, blending into olive on sides and flanks.

The male of the mountain form that nests in the mountains of Virginia has darker blue upperparts which are marked or blotched with black in the center of the back and has fine black streaking on its crown.

The song of the black-throated blue warbler is rendered a number of ways, one of which is "zee-zee-zee-zrwee," a buzzy call with a slurred upward ending. Sometimes it is described phonetically as "I am so la-ZEEE."

Lazy, this warbler is not. It's in constant motion from the time it arrives. Once on its breeding grounds, the male chooses a territory on the mountain slopes of laurel, rhododendron and a mix of other deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs. The female joins him later and they both defend their nesting and feeding territory with vigor.

The nest is usually located in the fork of a shrub or sapling, often in a blow down of a larger tree. The nest is built of grapevine bark strips, small pieces of rotting wood, moss, rootlets, animal hair, and often held together with spider silk. Four eggs is an av-

erage clutch. Incubation is done by the female and takes about 12 days. The young are fledged in another nine days. The male assists in the feeding, especially when the female begins a second brood.

Black-throated blue warblers feed on moth and butterfly caterpillars, other insect larvae, spiders and other small insects. Moving very quickly and nervously, they find most of the insects on the undersides of leaves, although they also catch flying insects on the wing in flycatcher fashion.

The black-throated blue warblers leave their more northerly breeding grounds in late-August to mid-September, moving along the eastern seaboard from the coast to the mountains from late-September into early-October. □



Attention Turkey Hunters

Checking your turkey this Spring
just got easier with



1-866-GOT-GAME
(1-866-468-4263)

- 1.** Notch the turkey tag on your big game license prior to moving the bird in any way. **Do not remove the tag from your license!**
- 2.** Check your turkey by calling 1-866-468-4263 or take it to a check station.
- 3.** Write check card number or telephone confirmation number in ink on the license tag next to the notch.
- 4.** Checking your turkey by the Telephone Checking System may require that you create a Telephone Check Card. (See 2004-2005 Hunting Regulation booklet for details.)

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